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ATTITUDES ON PHYSICAL AND MENTAL LABOR  
IN COMMUNIST CHINA

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## FOREWORD

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SEVERAL PROBLEMS CONCERNING THE ELIMINATION  
OF THE DIFFERENCES BETWEEN PHYSICAL AND MENTAL LABOR

- COMMUNIST CHINA -

[Following is the translation of an article  
by Shao Ping in Kuang-ming Jih-pao, Peiping,  
26 September 1960, page 3.]

Whether or not there will be physical labor and heavy labor at the higher stages of Communism is an important question well worth discussing. On this question, we concur with the spirit and the fundamental viewpoint of the article by Comrade Ching Ssu-erh published in edition No. 51 of "Economics", a supplement of Kuang-ming Jih-pao. We disagree with the spirit and certain important points of the two articles by Comrades Feng Ch'e and Wang Hui published in edition No. 54 of "Economics".

The Question of Correlation and Differentiation  
Between Physical and Mental Labor is a Question  
of Social Relations

First of all, we must avoid confusing the biological relationship between the laborer's personal physical power and mental power and the Marxist concept of correlation and differentiation between physical and mental labor which reflect a social relationship. Furthermore, we must not regard the correlation between physical and mental labor and the difference between physical and mental labor as one and the same. Otherwise, we would not be able to proceed with a lucid discussion of the question.

Physical labor and mental labor are the two basic forms of human labor. During the process of the performance of labor by laborer, the two are closely linked and indivisible. One cannot imagine the existence of a certain kind of "labor" having nothing whatsoever to do with mental labor or physical labor, because labor is a process, a process of the realization

of labor force. Labor force was understood by Marx as "the sum total of physical force and spiritual force. It exists in a person's body and in his living character. When he motivates it (labor), a functional value is usually produced"(1). Marx also pointed out that, in the process of labor, the laborer "knows his goal and uses this goal as his rule to decide upon the forms and methods of his activities and makes his will subject to this goal." "Throughout the entire course of his labors, he must also possess a purposeful will to be expressed as attention"(2). It may be seen that Marx has reasoned very penetratingly the unified and indivisible relationship between physical and mental force of the laborer in the process of laboring.

However, in studying the question of the relationship between physical and mental labor, Marx was not studying the above-mentioned biological relationship between physical and mental forces of the laborer in the process of laboring. He was studying a social relationship and he was studying it in conjunction with the production relationship, class relationship and the tasks of the proletariat revolution. Marx, Engels, Lenin, Comrade Mao Tse-tung and the pertinent resolutions passed by the Central Committee of our party all place the correlation and differentiation between physical and mental labor on a parallel with the relationship between urban and rural areas and the relationship between workers and farmers and, through them, disclose the relationships among men in a society and treat them as social contradictions.

The correlation or differences between physical and mental labor discussed by Marx are actually references to the correlation and differences between physical and mental workers. The clarification of this point is of importance to the question which we are going to discuss. This is because what we want to eliminate through social revolution is not physical labor or mental labor per se--they are going to co-exist with the human race--but the antagonism between them (which has already been eliminated with the victory of the Socialist revolution in our country) and the differences between them (which are gradually being eliminated in our country in accordance with the series of correct principles and policies laid down by Comrade Mao Tse-tung and the Central Committee of the Party).

The separation of physical and mental labor (including the differentiation and correlation between them) is the inevitable and unavoidable product of the development of the productive force of society at a certain stage. The elimination of the antagonism and differences between them is the regulated result of social development and one of the tasks

to be accomplished by genuine Marxists.

In primitive society, physical labor and mental labor were not yet separated. With the development of the productive forces of society, private ownership and exploitation came into being. With the arrival of slave society, complete separation of physical labor and mental labor came to pass. In other words, the phenomenon of the division of work in society between physical workers and mental workers emerged. Among the owners of slaves were those who specialized in mental labor. Aristotle, the great scientist of an ancient society, was himself an owner of slaves. The broad enslaved masses were engaged in the heaviest physical labor and were subjected to the cruel exploitation and inhuman treatment of the slave owners. To the slave owners, (among whom were those who specialized in mental labor) slaves (the physical laborers in those days) were "talking tools." This serves to show that the separation of physical and mental labor has been, from the very beginning of history, closely linked with the antagonistic class relationship, and exploitative relationship. Therefore, this separation signified the confrontation between the exploiters and the exploited.

The separation of physical and mental labor, which Marx at times also referred to as the "division of labor" in a society, emerged in answer to the needs of social development when the productive forces of society developed to a certain historical stage. It has exerted a motivating influence over the production and culture of society. However, one cannot white wash its antagonistic nature in a society of class exploitation on this account. This opposition, with the emergence of the modes of production of Feudalism and Capitalism, was continuously reborn in various concrete forms.

With the development of capitalism, the antagonistic contradiction between the relationship of production and the productive forces and between the upper structure and the economic foundation became increasingly acute; the contradiction between the proletariat and the bourgeois became increasingly acute and the antagonism between physical and mental labor also became increasingly acute. All these demanded that Socialist revolution be carried out, that the exploiting class be eliminated through the revolution of the proletariat and that, simultaneously, the foundation for the antagonism between physical and mental labor be eliminated.

In the society of the exploitation system, the relations between physical labor(ers) and mental labor(ers) crystallizes the relations between the classes. Mental labor, in general, denotes social administration (government),

production management, labor administration and work in science, technology and the arts. It is engaged in by a segment of the exploiting class and the intellectuals of the exploiting class. As for the majority of the exploiting elements, they are occupied solely in the pursuit of sensual pleasures and do not do a lick of work. They perform absolutely no mental or physical labor.

Physical labor, in general, denotes the heavy productive labor in the fields of industry, agriculture, transport and others performed by the broad masses, the oppressed and exploited laboring people. Physical laborers were exploited and oppressed by mental laborers and thus became "the most stupid and ignorant," because "they only repeat monotonously and mechanically the same actions," and "all their physical and spiritual capabilities are sacrificed"(3). Physical laborers, of necessity, were possessed of "professional idâocy" (as Marx put it) and limited intellectually.

The Socialist society established by the proletarian revolution and the dictatorship of the proletariat has, owing to the implementation of public ownership of the means of production, eliminated the exploitative system and wrought other social reforms. In general, the antagonism between physical and mental labor has been eliminated. However, the differences between physical and mental labor remain.

In other words, the separation between them in Socialist society is expressed in differences and not opposition. These differences are some of the vestiges of the old society which Socialist society cannot but retain. Owing to the fact that Socialist society is a transitory society in the progress from the Capitalist society to the Communist society, vestiges of the old society are inevitable. The socialist stage is one at which these differences go through the process of reduction to final elimination. Therefore, in the early stages of Socialism and the stage subsequent to the building of Socialism, the relationship between physical and mental labor is undergoing big changes.

At the present stage of Socialism, the differences between physical and mental labor mean that some people are engaged in physical labor and others are engaged in mental labor and that the two have yet to be completely combined. Besides, owing to such reasons as the differentiation in social status of physical and mental laborers, and the differences in conditions and modes of labor, differences are manifested in political ideology and cultural levels. Differences are also seen in the levels of living due to prolonged discrepancies in conditions of material living in the old society. These differences are seen in transitory social relationships at the primary stage of Communism.



The Elimination of the Distinction Between  
Physical and Mental Labor is a Historical  
Task of the Proletarian Revolution

The historical task of the proletarian revolution is to set up a Communist society and to carry out the most comprehensive, thorough and revolutionary remoulding of the society possible. Therefore, after the wresting of political power by the proletariat, one of the important aspects of the remoulding of social relations is the elimination of the exploiting class, the elimination of the antagonism between physical and mental labor and the gradual elimination of the differences between physical and mental labor. Of course, the high level of the development of the productive forces of the society is the material basis for the elimination of these differences. However, no matter how highly developed the level of the productive forces is, it cannot cause the differences between physical and mental labor to automatically disappear. The elimination of the differences requires the revolutionary remoulding of social relations.

In accordance with the universal truth of Marxism-Leninism, the Central Committee of the party and Comrade Mao Tse-tung scientifically summed up the rich experiences of the Socialist revolution and Socialist reconstruction of our country. They creatively developed the Marxist and Leninist theories pertaining to the building of Socialism and Communism, the theory of continuous revolution and the theory of the stages of revolutionary development. They also correctly solved problems pertaining to the Socialist revolution, Socialist reconstruction, the line, principles, policies and they took a series of concrete measures for the transition from Socialism to Communism. With regard to the elimination of the differences between physical and mental labor, our Party and the State formulated and implemented principles and policies of a series of related systems.

Examples of these are: the participation of the intellectuals and cadres in physical labor and their sharing of the food, quarters and labor of the masses of workers and farmers; their appearance in the capacity of common laborers; the participation of the workers in the management of enterprises; the conversion of intellectuals into laborers and the conversion of laborers into intellectuals; the combining of education and productive labor. This is effective proof.

The implementation of the Socialist revolution and Socialist reconstruction in our country eloquently proved the above-mentioned principles and policies to be entirely accurate. This is also the truth as we ourselves comprehend it.

It should be pointed out that the conversion of intellectuals into laborers and the participation of intellectuals in physical labor is an important measure for the elimination of the differences between physical and mental labor. One cannot imagine that by merely converting the masses of workers and farmers into intellectuals we really eliminate the differences between physical and mental labor, without making the intellectuals participate in physical labor, without making the intellectuals join the masses of workers and farmers in the practice of physical labor, and without making them nurture the feelings of the workers and farmers and remould their bourgeois thinking of looking down upon physical labor.

Of course, the elimination of the differences between physical and mental labor is not simple and cannot be accomplished with a snap of the fingers. Judging by actual conditions, the elimination of the differences between them may be more distant than the differences between workers and farmers and between the urban and rural areas, because the requirements for the remoulding and nurturing of all the people in society into new people of Communism may be higher and more difficult to meet than the requirements for the elimination of the differences between the workers and farmers and the urban and rural areas. However, the question hinges on whether we have the genuine Marxist spirit of continuous revolution and the courage to break away from all the bourgeois influences and whether we would incessantly strive to create a situation favorable to the elimination of these differences in the light of actual conditions.

#### Physical Labor Exists As Long As the Human Society Does

Material production is the basis of the existence of human society. If material production ceases, the human race cannot exist and society cannot exist. The important feature of the process of production is that people, through the implements of labor, function upon natural things and reconstruct natural things to meet the needs of men. Marx said, "First, labor is a process between man and nature. In this process, man, through his own activities, provokes, regulates and controls the material changes between man and nature. Man, in the capacity of a natural force, stands in opposition to natural materials "(4). All the wealth of society comes through material production; that is, it is created by human physical labor. It was so. It is so. And

it will be so. Therefore, we should regard physical labor as the first demand upon human life.

Comrades Feng Ch'e and Wang Hui criticized the concept held by Comrade Ching Szu-erh that the Communist society cannot eliminate physical labor as "a distortion of Communist society." It is "ludicrous," and "very erroneous and damaging," they said. We cannot agree with the remarks of Comrades Feng Ch'e and Wang Hui at all.

Comrade Feng Ch'e said that if it is to be acknowledged that the differences between physical and mental labor will be eliminated in Communist society, then it should also be acknowledged that physical labor will also be eliminated in Communist society. Otherwise, one would be "employing the gimmick of affirming (something) in principle, but negating (it) in substance and in the concrete." One would be stealthily negating "the principle of the elimination of the differences between physical and mental labor in Communist society." We are of the opinion that there is no contradiction between the facts that Communist society wants to eliminate the differences between physical and mental labor and that Communist society will not eliminate physical labor itself. The so-called elimination of the differences between physical and mental labor refers in the main to the elimination of the following phenomena: abnormal and one-sided development of physical and mental laborers, inability of those engaged in physical labor to perform mental labor and the inability of those engaged in mental labor to perform physical labor. We must eliminate social conditions that create these phenomena. We must cultivate completely new men who can voluntarily perform physical labor and can also perform mental labor in order to meet the needs of the development of Communist production.

Once the differences between physical and mental labor are eliminated, people will all be equipped with a high level of scientific and cultural upbringing and have a knowledge of production and will be better able to perform physical labor. Of course, the statement that physical labor will exist in Communist society does not mean that, by that time, some people will perform mental labor exclusively while others will perform mental labor exclusively.

Physical labor in a Communist society is physical labor under conditions ensuing from the elimination of the differences between physical and mental labor and is physical labor performed by people equipped with all-round knowledge and training. We think that is what Comrade Ching Szu-erh meant. Therefore, there is no foundation whatsoever for the assertion of Comrades Feng Ch'e and Wang Hui

that the admission of the existence of physical labor in Communist society means to deny the elimination of the differences between physical and mental labor inherited from the old society.

Comrade Feng Ch'e only allowed that there will be "productive labor" in Communist society, but would not allow that there will be physical labor by that time. His reasoning was that by that time, physical and mental labor will have been combined. This opinion has no leg to stand on. Physical and mental labor in a Communist society will be combined on the foundation of the Communist ownership system of the means of production. However, this combination does not mean the elimination of physical and mental labor. Engels, in explaining labor in the future Communist society, pointed out that, when society controls all the means of production and utilizes them in accordance with the plans of society, the enslavement of men by the means of production and the division of labor of the old days will be eliminate. Engels said: "In its place will be a production organization which, on the one hand, prevents people from shifting to others the part of productive labor (the natural condition(s) for human survival) which they should undertake, and, on the other, provides everyone with the possibility of all-round development and application of all his physical and mental powers. It (productive labor) will no longer be the means for enslavement of human beings but rather the means for the liberation of human beings.

Therefore, productive labor will be transformed from a heavy burden to a pleasure"(5). Comrades Feng Ch'e and Wang Hui might say that they agree that the retention of productive labor in the future Communist society is necessary, but would only allow the retention of physical labor. To admit the existence of productive labor in Communist society, but to refuse to admit the existence of physical labor is very strange logic indeed. This is the idealist view of productive labor.

The above quotation from Engels explicitly pointed out that in a Communist society "productive labor provides everyone with the possibility of all-round development and application of all his physical and mental power." Engels obviously closely related productive labor to physical labor, and did not reject physical labor as [a kind of] productive labor. We would like to pose a question to Comrade Feng and Wang: What are the contents of your so-called concept of productive labor? Why is it that productive labor in Communist society will not include physical labor?

Some people say, since Communist society will eliminate the division of labor of the old days, it will eliminate

the conditions for the imprisonment of workers in the narrow confines of their narrow professional capabilities and nurture a kind of totally developed new men. They say one will be able to exchange his position and duties in society. They say one will be able to pursue one profession today and another profession tomorrow. Therefore, in the Communist society, there will be no physical labor to speak of. This opinion is also incorrect.

First, the meaning of the pursuit of different professions by rotation by the new men in a Communist society should be correctly understood. Although, due to the capabilities of men to possess all kinds of knowledge, and because of the reduction in the time of labor and sufficiently favorable social conditions, the new men of Communist society will be well-rounded people. However, in any given length of time, the comprehension and skills of men will still be limited. Furthermore, there are the limits imposed by his life span.

Therefore, all-around development can hardly be understood as mastery of all fields. The correct interpretation should be: "Persons capable of performing many tasks and pursuing many professions, but with specialized knowledge and skills"(6). The so-called pursuit of different professions by rotation means that people need not be tied down for life to one job and may change jobs if they wish in accordance with the needs of society and personal abilities. It absolutely does not mean that relative stability of workers at their jobs is not required. This relative job stability is needed for the highly planned nature of Communism and gigantic production. In this respect, one can hardly imagine a situation as described by Francois Fourier, the day-dreaming Socialist: "People usually can sustain interest in one job for one and one-half to two hours. Therefore, a person should change jobs some eight times a day.....In this way, labor is free from pain and will be something like play. People will enthusiastically perform labor"(7). This is purely the Utopian designs of a day-dreamer. Marxism taught us: Communist labor does not mean "a mere pastime and pleasure and must not be understood according to the reasoning of the flippant Parisian women, as Fourier so naively did"(8). Our duty is to educate the people with Marxism and actively create the most beautiful Communist society and not to lead people into the never-never land of Utopia with a series of day-dreams.

Second, we must not use the fact that in the future Communist society people may pursue different jobs by rotation to deny the existence of physical labor at that time. In Communist society, people will select jobs not merely

according to their interest but, what is more important, according to the needs of society. And one of the most important needs of society is that people should be engaged in productive labor and create material wealth. Of course, by that time, the conditions of labor will have undergone fundamental changes. Labor conditions will have improved greatly and the intensity of labor will have decreased greatly. However, labor will remain a serious business and will require the expenditure of strenuous effort. Therefore, the viewpoint cannot be upheld that the rotation of jobs negates the existence of physical labor.

Comrade Wang Hui said that, after the elimination of physical labor, "there will be a return to human nature." We are of the opinion that "human nature" cannot be regarded as an eternal and invariable absolute truth. In class society, there is no abstract human nature which transcends times and classes. There is either the human nature of one class or the human nature of another class. It seems that since Comrade Wang Hui thinks the elimination of physical labor in Communist society is "the return of human nature," this kind of human nature is nothing but the human nature of the bourgeois which despise physical labor and not the human nature of the proletariat who are engaged in labor every day and love labor dearly. Comrade Chou Yang, in his report entitled "The Road of Socialist Letters and Art of Our Country," pointed out that ~~mixing Communism with the humanitarianism of the bourgeois~~ "would be catering to the preferences of the bourgeois and making communism acceptable to the bourgeois. The result would be not only the degradation of one's self to bourgeois ideology but also the playing of the role of someone who intentionally or unintentionally abets the bourgeois in hoodwinking and hypnotising the people." We should caution ourselves against this.

It should be pointed out that physical labor produces material things and that everybody consumes material things. If some people does not take part in physical labor, then other people have to do more of physical labor and other people's labor time will be prolonged. Only by participation of all in labor and the performance of labor on a high technical foundation can labor time be reduced so that all may have time for studies and rest. Only in this way can we popularize higher education and eliminate the differentiation between physical and mental labor.

Our Party has always emphasized the importance and significance of the participation of everybody in physical labor as the party has explicitly pointed out, "Men of the Socialist and Communist society must participate in labor."

Everybody must not only labor with his mind, but also with his hands." (Chu Teh: "Remarks at the Rally of the Young Activists of Central State Organizations for Socialist Reconstruction.")

In short, the viewpoint negating the existence of physical labor in the Communist society cannot be upheld. The negation of the existence of physical labor in the Communist society would inevitably lead to the ludicrous conclusion that the Communist society does not need material production. As so aptly put by Comrade Lin Feng in his report at the national conference of cultural and educational workers, "Unless the intellectuals participate in physical labor, they cannot change thoroughly the bourgeois concept of the world and they cannot hope to become bona fide communist as well as specialists."

If only the masses of workers and farmers are converted into intellectuals without converting intellectuals into laborers, then we cannot hope to eliminate the differentiation between physical and mental labor. If, once higher education is popularized in the future, the men we have nurtured are incapable of participating in physical labor, the country will be doomed to perdition. Can we go to some other planet to round up a batch of slaves to carry night soil and till the land for us? The truth reflected in these remarks is worthy of our profound thoughts.

Comrades Feng Ch'e and Wang Hui also disagreed with Comrade Ching Ssu-erh's viewpoint that Communist society will not be able to eliminate heavy labor. They said this viewpoint was "unsupportable" and "most unsatisfactory." We don't agree to this opinion held by Comrades Feng Ch'e and Wang Hui.

Heavy labor is relative to light labor. Heavy labor means labor of relatively high intensity that requires relatively high rate of consumption of labor power. Relatively speaking, when one kind of heavy labor is eliminated, another kind of labor has become heavy labor. Heavy labor exists in any society. Technical progress can eliminate any form of heavy labor, but it cannot completely eliminate all heavy labor. Technical progress is an indefinite process, and the elimination of heavy labor is also an indefinite process.

For instance, after the manual labor of earth and stone moving done in water conservancy projects is replaced by machinery, a certain kind of machinery operation will become heavy labor. The perpetuality of heavy labor is one reason that technical renovation and technical revolutions go on perpetually. Not only do small-scale indigenous-

style industries need technical renovation and technical revolution, but modern big enterprises also need technical renovation and technical revolution. Even after the complete conversion to automation of technique and equipment, it would not be, as some people say, just button-pushing and meter-watching. It is true that button-pushing and meter-watching are forms of labor under conditions subsequent to conversion to the automation of production. However, even this form of labor requires a high-level of attention. Furthermore, button-pushing and meter-watching is the form of labor when machinery is functioning normally. Once machinery is out of order, men must take emergency measures at once to detect and repair the malfunction. Then it usually becomes a kind of heavy labor. Therefore, it is erroneous to say that after the arrival of the Communist society, men's labor will be like "a game." Besides, labor in a Communist society is multifarious; certain kinds of labor require people to expend more physical power, others require people to give more concentrated attention, while still others require a high level of skill.

As a result, there are numerous differentiations of labor. Some are heavier. Some are lighter. Even Comrade Wang Hui had to admit that labor in a Communist society has distinctions. As a matter of fact, since one admits there are differences in the character of work in different production departments and differences in technical conditions, then one must admit that the intensity of physical labor differs with different production departments.

Relatively speaking, there will be heavy labor and light labor. What we want to eliminate now is the relative heavy labor of definite significance and definite form. Heavy labor itself can never be eliminated. This is an objective law.

Of course, the physical labor and heavy labor which we say will continue to exist in the Communist society definitely is not the same as physical labor and heavy labor of today. In the same way, we say that in the Communist society, with the development of productivity, the relationship between production and the upper structure will need continuous renovations and readjustments. In other words, perpetual revolution is required. But, by then, the nature and methods of revolution will be different. The reasoning of both statements is the same.



## The Correlation of Two Concepts of the World

Why are there people who oppose the view that physical and heavy labor will exist in Communist society? As we see it, this results from their working at the future Communist society with the bourgeois concept of the world. Those of the exploiting class never perform labor. They are able to lead a licentious and shameless life by exploiting the blood and sweat of the laborers. This, therefore, is in accordance with their concept of the world and they wish that there should not, of course, be physical labor, particularly heavy labor.

This bourgeois concept of the world finds expression in Comrade Wang Hui's article.

Comrade Feng Ch'e said that "stressing that a Communist society will eliminate neither physical nor heavy labor" will make people feel deprived of "any hope" in Communist society. It seems that this is not the "hope" of the broad mass of workers and farmers who regard physical labor as the first necessity of human life but the "hope" of the bourgeois who detest labor and indulge in leisure. The proletariat persevere in their struggle and intrepidly rush towards Communism, not for the purpose of winning a "society" without physical labor.

As to the statement that people would be "discouraged" by the assertion that physical and heavy labor will exist in Communist society, those who feel discouraged are not the proletariat but the bourgeois. This is because the proletariat have always been engaged in physical labor and they really are not afraid of physical labor. The broad mass of veteran laborers on the one hand, perform labor in disregard of conditions and remuneration and perform heavy labor themselves and let other people take light labor. On the other hand, they are actively engaged in technical renovations and technical revolutions and are fighting valiantly to eliminate the heavy labor at hand and raise the rate of production.

Today they are building a great mansion for the new society with their two toiling hands and will create a better tomorrow with their two toiling hands. Only the bourgeois who have never done physical labor are afraid of physical labor. Therefore, when they hear that physical labor will exist in Communist society, they feel discouraged. It is a good thing that the discouragement of the bourgeois who are opposed to physical labor has been exposed now rather than later. We should also thoroughly reform the bourgeois concept of the world.

Comrade Wang Hui said that in a Communist society people regard labor "as the first demand[made of them] and accept it gladly and not as a heavy burden imposed upon themselves" because by that time heavy labor will have been eliminated. It is true that the improvement of labor conditions and the reduction of the intensity of labor will have definite effects on the reduction of the consumption of physical power. However, it is the people's political ideology which plays the deciding role in making people regard labor as the most important thing and the first demand.

To those who have thoroughly eliminated the influence of the bourgeois concept of the world and possess a high Communist consciousness, labor is still regarded as the first demand of life even under labor conditions in a found Socialist society. For example, in our country, even though there have been great developments in production and great improvement in technical conditions since the liberation, manual work still plays a very big role in agricultural and industrial pproduction. Even under such conditions, numerous veteran producers have never regarded physical and heavy labor as heavy burdens. They regard it as a demand [made on them] by life and a pleasure. Therefore, they work hard and skillfully and continuously bring about miracles. This is something which people with the bourgeois concept of the world cannot understand. We are of the opinion that the unequivocal statement of the existence of physical and heavy labor in Communist society will not obstruct peoplw with a high Communist consciousness from actively striving to accelerate the transition to Communism.

#### Notes

- (1) Capital, by Karl Marx, Vol. I, page 176, People's Press edition.
- (2) Ditto, page 192.
- (3) Anti-Duhring, by Friedrich Engels, 1956 edition published by People's Press, pp 308 and 309.
- (4) Capital by Karl Marx, Vol. I, pp 191-192.
- (5) Anti-Duhring by Friedrich Engels, 1956 edition published by People's Press, page 310.
- (6) "Education Must be Combined with Productive Labor" by Lu Ting-yi, page 7, No. 7, 1958 of Red Flag.
- (7) "On Communist Society" published by the Chinese People's University Press, page 83.
- (8) Critique of Political Economy, by Karl Marx.

THE ARTICLE "ON THE ELIMINATION OF  
PHYSICAL LABOR" IS ERRONEOUS AND DAMAGING

[Following is the translation of a resume of  
contributed articles in Kuang-ming Jih-pao,  
Peiping, 26 September 1960.]

After the publication of the articles by Comrades Feng Ch'e and Wang Hui in Number 54 of this supplement criticizing the viewpoint held by Comrade Ching Ssu-erh that "Communist society cannot eliminate physical and heavy labor," we have received quite a number of contributions which present opinions different from the viewpoint held by Comrades Feng and Wang and which regard this viewpoint as "a theory of elimination of physical labor" and as erroneous and damaging.

Comrades Feng and Wang are of the opinion that, since Communist society eliminates the antagonism and differentiation between physical and mental labor, it cannot be said physical labor will exist in the Communist society. This is their sole basis for opposing the viewpoint that physical labor will exist in Communist society. Many comrades think this is entirely baseless. Comrade Kung Yin-wang said in his contributed article: "In the Communist society, physical labor and mental labor will be fused together completely and all will possess a high level of awareness and scientific knowledge and perform both "physical labor" and "mental labor." Not only will the antagonism and difference between them be eliminated, but also eliminated will be the die-hard forces left behind by the class society and existing in people's thinking and consciousness, forces which look down upon physical labor. Physical labor will exist in Communist labor as the primary demand [made] of people.

The conclusion is that the elimination of physical labor absolutely cannot be found by eliminating the distinction between physical and mental labor." Comrade Hsin Hua said in his contributed article: "The so-called elimination of the difference between physical and mental labor does not mean the elimination of two forms of labor--physical and mental--themselves. Nor does it mean that, at the higher Communist stage, labor is neither physical nor mental labor,

but another special kind of labor. The elimination of the differences between physical and mental labor really means the elimination of the differences between the physical worker and the mental worker, or, in other words, the elimination of the social phenomenon whereby some people perform nothing but physical labor and lack cultural and scientific knowledge while others perform nothing but mental labor and are divorced from physical labor. It means the realization of the goal presented by the party that "intellectuals should be converted into laborers, while the labor masses should be converted into intellectuals."

The contributed articles pointed out that physical labor is the foundation on which human society exists and develops and that Communist society cannot do without physical labor. Comrades Hsu Kuang-chu and Liu Sung-sou, in their article, said: "As is generally known, the production of materials has always been the foundation on which humans exist and develop, and the production of materials cannot be carried out without physical labor. In a Communist society, physical labor will still be the indispensable means for nurturing the new men of Communism. And in the present period of transition from Capitalism to Communism, physical labor is an important means for the reformation of people's bourgeois concept of the world and the elevation of people's Communistic consciousness."

Whether for the present or after the arrival of Communist society, the significance of physical labor absolutely cannot be overlooked."

Comrade Hsin Hua wrote, "Physical labor will always be the condition for the existence and development of human society and will always be the means for the creation of material wealth and the foundation of mental labor. Without physical labor, there will be no production and human society will be doomed to perdition."

Although with the development of the technical and cultural revolution, heavy manual labor will be replaced by machine labor and the wear and tear of labor will be greatly reduced, the form of physical labor will exist forever, even thousands and tens of thousands of years from now.

The education policy of the party has as its premise the concept that physical labor will still exist in Communist society and will be of decisive significance. The education policy and the policy of the conversion of intellectuals into laborers of the party denote the significance given physical labor by the party and reflect the viewpoint and attitude of Marxism on physical labor.

The fusion of education and productive labor and the conversion of intellectuals into laborers are not only policies

for the time being, but policies applicable in a Communist society. They are not tactical policies but strategic policies. They are not only required by Socialist revolution and Socialist reconstruction, but also required by Communism. Unless intellectuals take part in physical labor, they cannot remould their ideology and cannot be bona fide Communists and specialists. Knowledge divorced from physical labor is incomplete and lifeless knowledge. This lifeless knowledge does not meet the needs of the socialist revolution and reconstruction at present, and will not meet the needs of the Communist reconstruction in the future." They quoted from the message given by Comrade Lu Ting-yi on behalf of the Central Committee of the Chinese Communist Party and the State Council at the National Conference of Cultural and Educational Workers as follows: "The wealth of society can only be created by means of human physical labor. It was so. It is so. And it will be so." This proves that only the exploiting class looks down upon physical labor and physical laborers. We should regard physical labor as the primary demand of human life.

Regarding the question whether Communist society can eliminate physical labor, Comrade Hsu Kuang-chu wrote, "We should understand that in Communist society the objectives of labor and the means of labor in all segments of community life cannot be exactly the same. Thus, as the conditions of labor even in the same production departments cannot be exactly the same, while physical labor in Communist society will be much lighter than at present, the consumption of physical strength will vary. That is, certain kinds of labor require the expenditure of more physical strength, while others require the expenditure of less physical strength. Of course, they are relative and comparative to each other. Some people understand Communist labor as 'button-pushing and meter-watching--easy work and entirely effortless.' Comrade Ssu-erh, addressing himself to this concept, pointed out that heavy physical labor will exist in the Communist society. He attempted to explain that Communist physical labor is not light and easy like a game. He tried to remind people of Marx's teaching that labor in a Communist society will remain 'a very serious business, an effort of high intensity.' Therefore, the writer's motive is proper and of realistic significance."

The articles hold the propagation of "the theory of elimination of physical labor" by Comrade Feng Ch'e and others in their articles as erroneous and damaging and a serious distortion of Communism. Comrade Kung Yin-Wang of Ching Hua University opined: "In discussing whether physical labor

will exist in Communist society, we intend to enable people to have a correct Marxist understanding of our great ideal--Communism. We intend that they have a clear view of the direction and route of advance and that they redouble their efforts to promote the development of society. Since we take this requirement as a starting point, the viewpoint held by Comrade Feng Ch'e and others that Communist society will eliminate physical labor is very damaging. I am reminded of the great debate on labor held on our campus last year. A few fellow students who retained the bourgeois viewpoint advanced conjectures about Communist society in the light of the corrupt bourgeois concept of the world. They said that, as a result of the development of science and technology, everything will have been converted to automation. All people will have to do is to push buttons and everything they want will come to hand.

Some were of the opinion that even button pushing was unnecessary, since a wonderful kind of electro-magnetic waves can be transmitted from people's brains. For instance, when you want to eat sausages, your brain will automatically transmit signals to the place where the sausages are located. Upon receipt of the signals, sausages will be sent over to you.

As a result they came to this conclusion: In a Communist society, people do not have to perform physical labor, because all they need to do is to think while sitting in a comfortable arm-chair. By then, people will be just consumers. Finally, they asked, since physical labor will not be required in Communist society, whether we should stress participation in physical labor now? They asked whether it was not better for us to acquire more knowledge and create more automation devices. It turned out that their avid love for the elimination of physical labor in Communist society was for the purpose of opposing and rejecting participation in labor now. However, the great majority jeered at their ludicrous theory which went bankrupt after having being subjected to thorough refutation. This example serves to prove that the viewpoint that Communist society wants to eliminate physical labor is very ridiculous and damaging.

Comrade Feng Ch'e held the opinion that the affirmation of the continued existence of physical labor in Communist society is 'discouraging to people and makes them feel deprived of hope.' I do not know to whom Comrade Feng Ch'e referred to by 'people' in this instance. If he referred to the hundreds of millions of the masses, the workers and farmers of our country, then this reference constitutes a gross slander of them. Everyone knows that our hundreds of

millions of laboring people, under the leadership of the Party, have developed stupendous perseverance and wisdom and have worked and are working unprecedented miracles.

In order to change the face of the 'utter poverty' of our country and to complete the building of Communism at an early date, they are selflessly working day and night. They have always regarded physical labor as a matter of course. They have deemed the greatest pleasure the fact that in performing labor they are creating happiness for generations to come. How can one say that they would feel "deprived of hope" and "discouraged" when they hear that physical labor will continue to exist in the Communist society? 'People' who 'feel discouraged' are those bourgeois intellectuals who are unwilling to participate in physical labor and look down upon physical labor. Only these people, witnessing the development of the society of our country at a flying speed and the gradual elimination of the differences between physical and mental labor and the impending nullification of the status and privileges due to their monopoly of knowledge, would then cry out in desperation and feel deprived of any hope."